

EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES AUTHORITY

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DATE: September 27, 2000

TO: Commission on EMS

FROM: Richard E. Watson
Interim Director

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SUBJECT: Emergency Department On-Call Physician Panel

RECOMMENDED ACTION(s):

Receive information regarding the Emergency Department and On-call Physician Panels.

FISCAL IMPACT:

None

DISCUSSION:

On February 25, 2000, Assembly Member Gallegos introduced Assembly Bill 2611, Health Facilities: emergency services. Prior to the August 30, 2000 amendment, this bill provided for the following:

- ~~/s/~~ Hospitals with basic emergency departments would be required to develop and maintain a date-specific list of physician specialists responsible for responding to requests for consultation.
- ~~/s/~~ Permits hospitals to require emergency call coverage as a condition of hospital privileges
- ~~/s/~~ Define emergency services and care to include specialist consultation.
- ~~/s/~~ It would be unprofessional conduct for a physician who is scheduled for call to refuse to care for a patient or unnecessarily delay caring for a patient in the emergency department.

This bill was introduced as a result of increasing concerns over the difficulties ensuring emergency department on-call panel physician coverage as managed care has become more prevalent. The degree of the on-call coverage problem fluctuates among specialties and geographic locations depending upon a given specialist supply and demand for services.

A survey of hospitals conducted by a task force, formed jointly by the California Hospital Association, California Medical Association and the California Chapter of the American College of Emergency Physicians, found that 60% of the respondents perceived call coverage to be a serious or somewhat serious problem at their hospital.

On August 31, 2000, AB 2611 was enrolled with major amendment language. In order to provide the Legislature with research on this important issue, the amended bill deleted all previous proposed statute language and now provides for a comprehensive study of the hospital emergency department on-call coverage issue in California by the Senate Office of Research. The Senate office will convene a working group of affected California stakeholders and report to the Legislature by January 1, 2002.